

DECISION MEMO & CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION
GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATION, CD-16-02-S
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
T02N, R08E, SECTION 1 - WYETH/GORTON CREEK
COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
HOOD RIVER COUNTY
NOVEMBER 13, 2015

BACKGROUND

The Federal Highway Administration (FHA), Western Federal Lands, has applied for a special use permit to conduct geotechnical explorations on National Forest System (NFS) land within the proposed future alignment of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) State Trail reconstruction. The project consists of geotechnical explorations (two exploratory boreholes) on either side of Gorton Creek on the proposed alignment of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) State Trail, Segment A*, to characterize geotechnical conditions in support of design and construction of a trail bridge over Gorton Creek. Two five-inch diameter boreholes will be drilled in previously disturbed areas using a truck-mounted drill rig. Depth will depend on bedrock depth, up to a total depth of 125 feet. The project will not require any additional earth work or vegetative clearing or limbing. The boreholes will be located approximately 70 feet from the edges of the creek. The east borehole will be located within the shoulder of the paved driveway access to Wyeth Campground. The west borehole will be located within an existing graveled pullout adjacent to the existing roadway. The holes will be filled when boring is complete. No in-channel work is proposed. Water for drilling operations will be staged from a water truck near the drill site. The explorations are expected to last less than 30 days, and will be completed as soon as possible.

** Note: This proposal is limited to these two boreholes only. It is separate from and does not include any components of the broader HCRH State Trail Segment A proposal. A determination of Scenic Area consistency for this geotechnical investigation does not imply or infer a finding of consistency for any component of the HCRH State Trail proposal.*

DECISION MEMO

I have decided to approve the issuance of a special use permit to the Federal Highway Administration, Western Federal Lands, for short-term geotechnical exploration at Gorton Creek as described in the application materials.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable categories of action are identified in agency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(7): *Short-*

term geophysical investigations and 36 CFR 220.6(d)(8): Approval, modification, or continuation of minor, short-term (1 year or less) special uses of NFS lands. These categories of action are applicable because of the authorized activity is the drilling of boreholes for the purpose of geotechnical investigation, and the project is of short duration.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. *The proposal was reviewed by a Forest Service fish and wildlife biologist and a Forest Service ecologist, and the likelihood and consequence of adverse effects from the proposed activity was found to be low. Impacts to fish and wildlife are expected to be minimal.*
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. *None are present.*
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas. *The project is located within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). The project was reviewed and found to be consistent with the Scenic Area Act and the CRGNSA Management Plan.*
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas. *None are present.*
- Research natural areas. *None are present.*
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. *Cultural resource surveys have been completed and the resulting report has been reviewed by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. No sites of religious or cultural importance are known to exist in the project area.*
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. *Cultural resource surveys have been completed and the resulting report has been reviewed by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. There will be no effect to any significant archaeological sites and no effect to the Historic Columbia River Highway National Historic Landmark District.*

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A notice describing the project was posted to the CRGNSA website, and sent to a mailing list of known interested parties, tribes, and adjacent landowners, on November 16, 2015. The following two comments were received:

- Gifford Pinchot Accountability Group commented: *"We find no reason for this project to move forward as quickly as possible. We also find it is unreasonable to require a determination of compliance with the scenic area management plan for such minor projects on disturbed sites."*

USFS Response: Geotechnical investigations are neither a Use Allowed Outright or an

Expedited Review Use under the Scenic Area Management Plan. A determination of consistency is required for this project proposal.

- Friends of the Columbia Gorge commented: *“Friends supports efforts to develop and enhance recreation resources so long as the project complies with all scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resource protection guidelines.”* Their letter included additional comments *“to help ensure that the proposal complies with Scenic Area resource protection guidelines and the Forest Service’s review complies with NEPA.”*

USFS Response: The environmental review, Findings of Fact, and Decision Memo document the project’s compliance with the relevant guidelines of the Scenic Area Management Plan and with NEPA.

NATIONAL SCENIC AREA CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

The proposed geotechnical investigation is required to be consistent with the purposes of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act as determined by the Forest Service pursuant to Section 14(d) of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. A complete consistency review application was received in my office in September 2015.

I find that the proposed geotechnical investigation is consistent with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) Management Plan provided that it is implemented as described in the application materials, the CRGNSA Consistency Determination Findings of Fact, referenced as CD-16-02-S, and provided the following conditions are applied:

1. Should any historic or prehistoric cultural resources be uncovered during project activities, the applicant shall cease work and immediately notify the CRGNSA office and the Washington Office of Archeology and Historical Preservation. The applicant will also notify the Indian Tribal governments within 24 hours if the resources are prehistoric or otherwise associated with Native American Indians.
2. If any vegetated area is disturbed, it should be seeded with an approved native seed mix. Seed mix and time of seeding should be coordinated with the Forest Service botanist.
3. Work must be conducted between October 1 and February 28 in order to avoid potential disturbance to northern spotted owl.
4. Keep and maintain equipment as far as possible from the stream channel and on existing paved or graveled areas.
5. Any waste material not used to refill the boreholes should be removed to a suitable location at least 300 feet from the stream channel.
6. Utilize adequate erosion control measures to prevent delivery of sediment to the stream channel during drilling activities and until activities are completed.
7. If work is conducted during the operating season for Wyeth Campground, the entrance road to the campground should remain open. If closure is necessary it should be temporary, with traffic flow managed by flaggers.

8. The permit holder will be responsible for locating existing utilities in the area before drilling and for repairing any infrastructure damaged during operations. Permit holder must determine whether boreholes are within the Wyeth Road right-of-way and contact the appropriate authority.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

A written request for review of the Consistency Determination, with reasons to support the request, must be received within 20 days of the date shown with the Area Manager signature below. Requests for review should be addressed to: Request for Review, Regional Forester, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This project may begin immediately as long as it complies with the conditions as described in items 1 through 8 above. This decision expires two years after the date on this determination. If implementation has not commenced before that date, a new consistency review or request for extension shall be required.

CONTACT

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area staff prepared an analysis file in conjunction with this project. For further information, contact Robin Shoal at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, phone: (541) 308-1716, e-mail: rshoal@fs.fed.us.


LYNN BURDITT

Area Manager

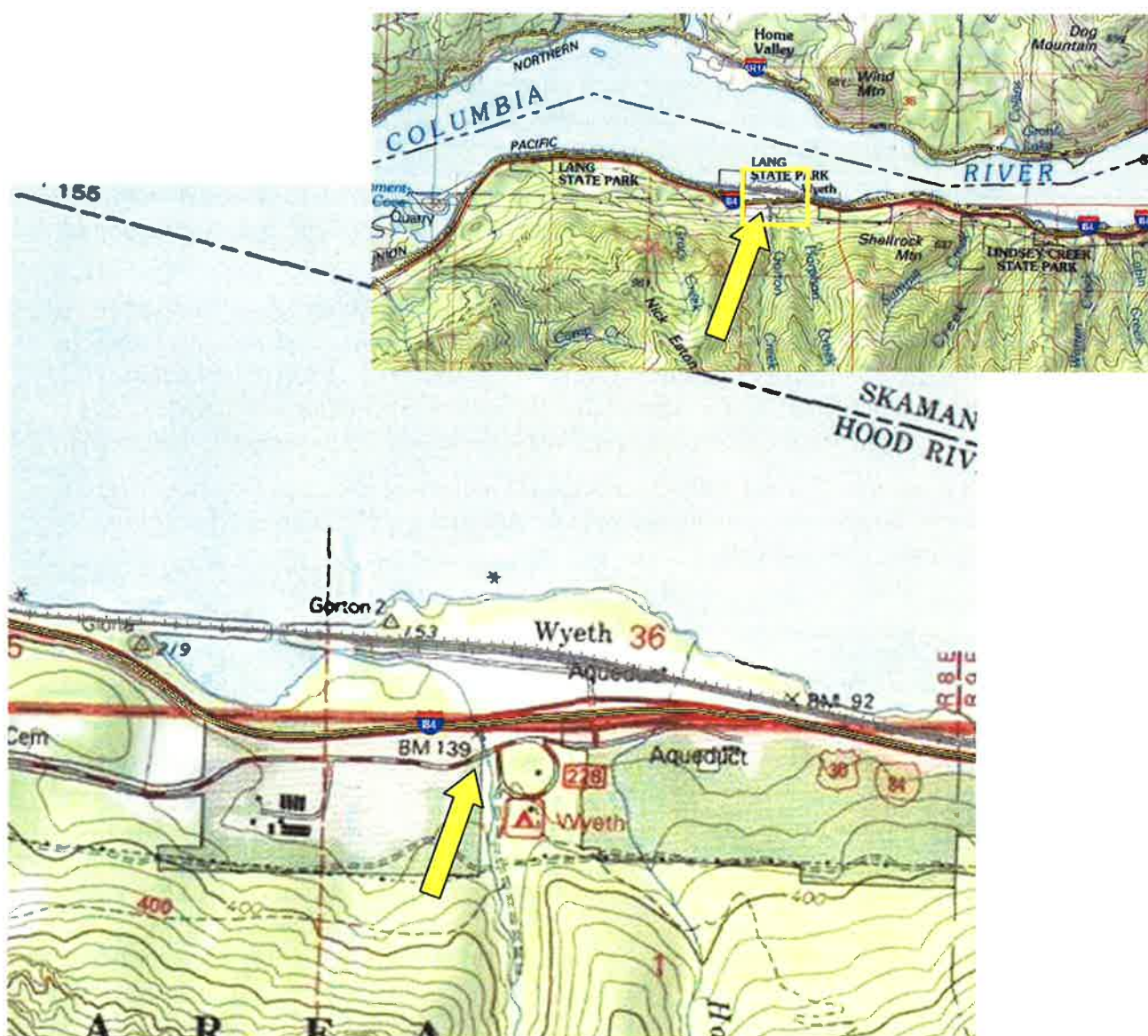
11/16/2015

Date

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FINDINGS OF FACT

LANDOWNER:	USDA Forest Service
PROPOSED ACTION:	FHA Geotechnical Investigation
LOCATION:	Township Range Section: T02N, R08E, Section 01 Tax lot ID: 02N08E01500 UTM:
NATIONAL SCENIC AREA DESIGNATION:	Special Management Area (SMA)
LAND USE DESIGNATION:	SMA Forest, SMA Agriculture, SMA Public Recreation
LANDSCAPE SETTING	Coniferous Woodlands



Vicinity Map - Yellow arrows indicate project location. Project is located on the south side of the existing bridge crossing Gorton Creek.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The following findings of fact contain the applicable standards and guidelines from the CRGNSA Management Plan. The Management Plan, as adopted in 2004 and updated in 2011, is in effect. The CRGNSA Management Plan standards and guidelines are displayed in regular type. The findings are displayed in **bold type**.

A. PUBLIC COMMENT

A notice describing the project was sent to a mailing list of known interested parties and adjacent landowners on November 16, 2015. A period of 25 days was allowed for public comment. The following comments were received:

- Gifford Pinchot Accountability Group commented: *“We find no reason for this project to move forward as quickly as possible. We also find it is unreasonable to require a determination of compliance with the scenic area management plan for such minor projects on disturbed sites.”*

USFS Response: Geotechnical investigations are not either a Use Allowed Outright or an Expedited Review Use under the Scenic Area Management Plan. A determination of consistency is required for this project proposal.

- Friends of the Columbia Gorge commented: *“Friends supports efforts to develop and enhance recreation resources so long as the project complies with all scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resource protection guidelines.”* Their letter included additional comments *“to help ensure that the proposal complies with Scenic Area resource protection guidelines and the Forest Service’s review complies with NEPA.”*

USFS Response: The environmental review, Findings of Fact, and Decision Memo document the project’s compliance with the relevant guidelines of the Scenic Area Management Plan and with NEPA.

B. PROJECT PROPOSAL

The project consists of geotechnical explorations (2 exploratory boreholes) on either side of Gorton Creek on the proposed alignment of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) State Trail, Segment A*, to characterize geotechnical conditions in support of construction of Gorton Creek Bridge. Five-inch diameter boreholes will be completed in previously disturbed areas using a truck-mounted drill rig. Depth will depend on bedrock depth, up to a total depth of 125 feet. The boreholes will not require any additional earth work or vegetative clearing or limbing. The borehole at the east abutment will be located within the shoulder of the paved driveway access to Wyeth Campground. The borehole at the west abutment will be located within an existing graveled pullout adjacent to the existing roadway. The explorations are expected to last less than 30 days, start to finish and be completed as soon as possible in 2015. The boreholes will be located approximately 70 feet from the edges of the creek. The holes will be filled when boring is complete. No in-channel work is proposed. Water for drilling operations will be staged from a water truck near the drill site. Some noise associated with drilling is expected.

** NOTE: This proposal is for these two boreholes only. It is separate from and does not include any components of the broader HCRH State Trail Segment A proposal. A determination of Scenic Area consistency for this geotechnical exploration does not imply or infer a finding of consistency for any component of the HCRH State Trail proposal.*

C. LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The project area is within the Special Management Area (SMA). The stream corridor of Gorton Creek is designated SMA Forest. Given that the anticipated placement of the boreholes is approximately 70 feet from the edges of the streambank on either side, it is likely that the borehole on the west side of the creek will be in the SMA Agriculture land use designation, and that the borehole on the east side of the creek will be in the SMA Public Recreation designation.

The entire project area is within the Coniferous Woodland Landscape Setting.

D. SCENIC RESOURCES

The Management Plan, Part I, Chapter 1 (Scenic Resources), SMA guidelines, states:

SMA Design Guidelines Based on Landscape Settings

1. The following guidelines apply to all lands within SMA landscape settings regardless of visibility from KVAs (includes areas seen from KVAs as well as areas not seen from KVAs):
 - B. Coniferous Woodland and Oak-Pine Woodland: Woodland areas shall retain the overall appearance of a woodland landscape. New developments and land uses shall retain the overall visual character of the natural appearance of the Coniferous Woodland and Oak-Pine Woodland landscape.
 - (1) Buildings shall be encouraged to have a vertical overall appearance in the Coniferous Woodland landscape setting and a horizontal overall appearance in the Oak-Pine Woodland landscape setting.
 - (2) Use of plant species native to the landscape setting shall be encouraged. Where non-native plants are used, they shall have native-appearing characteristics.

Findings: No buildings or plantings are proposed. The proposal will not change the current conditions of the landscape setting.

1. The guidelines in this section shall apply to proposed developments on sites topographically visible from key viewing areas.
2. New developments and land uses shall be evaluated to ensure that the required scenic standard is met and that scenic resources are not adversely affected, including cumulative effects, based on the degree of visibility from key viewing areas.
3. The required SMA scenic standards for all development and uses are summarized in the following table:

Required SMA Scenic Standards		
LANDSCAPE SETTING	LAND USE DESIGNATION	SCENIC STANDARD
Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland	Forest (National Forest Lands), Open Space	Not Visually Evident
River Bottomlands	Open Space	Not Visually Evident
Gorge Walls, Canyonlands, Wildlands	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation, Open Space	Not Visually Evident
Coniferous Woodland, Oak-Pine Woodland	Forest, Agriculture, Residential, Public Recreation	Visually Subordinate
Residential	Residential	Visually Subordinate
Pastoral	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation, Open Space	Visually Subordinate
River Bottomlands	Forest, Agriculture, Public Recreation	Visually Subordinate

(The proposed project consists of drilling two borehole for the purposes of geotechnical investigation. No structures are proposed. The remaining guidelines in this section are not applicable.)

Findings: The project site is topographically visible from Wyeth Bench Road. The proposal does not include any above-ground structures or any other development beyond the drilling and refilling of two boreholes for the purpose of geotechnical exploration. The project meets scenic standards.

E. CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Management Plan, Part I, Chapter 2 (Cultural Resources), SMA Policies states:

1. New developments or land uses shall not adversely affect significant cultural resources.
2. Federal agencies shall follow steps 1 through 5 under Guideline 4 below, for new developments or land uses on all federal lands, federally assisted projects, and forest practices.
7. The Forest Service shall consult with the Indian tribal governments and other consulting parties in performing steps 1 through 5 under guideline 4.

The Management Plan, Part I, Chapter 2 (Cultural Resources), SMA Guidelines states:

5. Determination of potential effects to significant cultural resources shall include consideration of cumulative effects of proposed developments that are subject to any of the following: 1) a reconnaissance or historic survey; 2) a determination of significance; 3) an assessment of effect; or 4) a mitigation plan. (Added: U.S. Sec. Ag. concurrence 7/1/11)

Findings: The Forest Service Archaeologist reviewed the proposal and found that required surveys have been previously completed for the project area. There will be no effect to the HCRH National Historic Landmark District. The project has been determined to have no effect to significant cultural resources. Therefore, there are no cumulative effects associated with the project.

A condition should be placed stating that should any historic or prehistoric cultural resources be uncovered during project activities, the applicant shall cease work and immediately notify the CRGNSA office and the Washington Office of Archeology and Historical Preservation. The applicant should also notify the Indian Tribal governments within 24 hours if the resources are prehistoric or otherwise associated with Native American Indians.

The following procedures will apply if cultural resources are discovered during project implementation:

Cultural Resources Discovered After Construction Begins

1. The following procedures shall be effected when cultural resources are discovered during construction activities. All survey and evaluation reports and mitigation plans shall be submitted to the local government and the SHPO. Indian tribal governments also shall receive a copy of all reports and plans if the cultural resources are prehistoric or otherwise associated with Native Americans.

- A. Halt of Construction. All construction activities within 100 feet of the discovered cultural resource shall cease. The cultural resources shall remain as found; further disturbance is prohibited.
- B. Notification. The project applicant shall notify the local government and the Gorge Commission within 24 hours of the discovery. If the cultural resources are prehistoric or otherwise associated with Native Americans, the project applicant shall also notify the Indian tribal governments within 24 hours.
- C. Survey and Evaluation. The Gorge Commission shall survey the cultural resources after obtaining written permission from the landowner and appropriate permits from the SHPO. (See Oregon Revised Statute [ORS] [273.705](#), [ORS 358.905 to 358.955](#), and Revised Code of Washington [RCW] [27.53](#)). It shall gather enough information to evaluate the significance of the cultural resources. The survey and evaluation shall be documented in a report that generally follows the guidelines in the "Reconnaissance Survey Reports--Large-Scale Uses" and "Evaluation of Significance: Evaluation Criteria and Information Needs" sections of this chapter.

Based on the survey and evaluation report and any written comments, the local government shall make a final decision on whether the resources are significant. Construction activities may recommence if the cultural resources are not significant.

A mitigation plan shall be prepared if the affected cultural resources are significant.

- D. Mitigation Plan. Mitigation plans shall be prepared according to the information, consultation, and report guidelines contained in the "Mitigation Plans: Mitigation

Plan Criteria and Information Needs" section of this chapter. Construction activities may recommence when the conditions in the mitigation plan have been executed.

Discovery of Human Remains

1. The following procedures shall be effected when human remains are discovered during a cultural resource survey or during construction. Human remains means articulated or disarticulated human skeletal remains, bones, or teeth, with or without attendant burial artifacts.

- A. Halt of Activities. All survey, excavation, and construction activities shall cease. The human remains shall not be disturbed any further.
- B. Notification. Local law enforcement officials, the local government, the Gorge Commission, and the Indian tribal governments shall be contacted immediately. In Washington, the state forensic physical anthropologist shall also be notified.
- C. Inspection. The county coroner, or appropriate official, shall inspect the remains at the project site and determine if they are prehistoric/historic or modern. Representatives from the Indian tribal governments shall have an opportunity to monitor the inspection.
- D. Jurisdiction. If the remains are modern, the appropriate law enforcement officials shall assume jurisdiction and the cultural resource protection process may conclude.
- E. Treatment. In Oregon, prehistoric/historic remains of Native Americans shall generally be treated in accordance with the procedures set forth in [ORS 97.740 to 97.760](#). In Washington, the procedures set forth in RCW [27.44](#) and [68.05](#) shall generally be implemented if the remains are prehistoric/historic.

If the human remains will be reinterred or preserved in their original position, a mitigation plan shall be prepared in accordance with the consultation and report requirements specified in the "Mitigation Plans: Mitigation Plan Criteria and Information Needs" section of this chapter.

The mitigation plan shall accommodate the cultural and religious concerns of Native Americans. The cultural resource protection process may conclude when the conditions set forth in the "Mitigation Plans: Conclusion of the Cultural Resource Protection Process" section of this chapter are met and the mitigation plan is executed.

F. NATURAL RESOURCES

The Management Plan, Part II, Chapter 3 (Natural Resources), SMA guidelines, states:

WATER RESOURCES (WETLANDS, STREAMS, PONDS, LAKES, AND RIPARIAN AREAS)

SMA Guidelines

1. All new developments and uses, as described in a site plan prepared by the applicant, shall be evaluated using the following guidelines to ensure that natural resources are protected from adverse effects. Comments from state and federal agencies shall be carefully considered. (Site plans are described under “Review Uses” in Part II, Chapter 7: General Policies and Guidelines.)
2. Water Resources (Wetlands, Streams, Ponds, Lakes, and Riparian Areas)
(Guidelines 2(D) and 2(F) are not applicable.)
 - A. All Water Resources shall, in part, be protected by establishing undisturbed buffer zones as specified in 2.A.(2)(a) and 2(b) below. These buffer zones are measured horizontally from a wetland, stream, lake, or pond boundary as defined below.
 - (1) All buffer zones shall be retained undisturbed and in their natural condition, except as permitted with a mitigation plan.
 - (2) Buffer zones shall be measured outward from the bank full flow boundary for streams, the high water mark for ponds and lakes, the normal pool elevation for the Columbia River, and the wetland delineation boundary for wetlands on a horizontal scale that is perpendicular to the wetlands, stream, pond or lake boundary. On the main stem of the Columbia River above Bonneville Dam, buffer zones shall be measured landward from the normal pool elevation of the Columbia River. The following buffer zone widths shall be required:
 - (a) A minimum 200 foot buffer on each wetland, pond, lake, and each bank of a perennial or fish bearing stream, some of which can be intermittent.

Findings: Gorton Creek is a perennial stream. A minimum 200-foot buffer width applies. The project is within the stream buffer for Gorton Creek - a mitigation plan is required. The remaining guidelines in section A. are not applicable to this project.

B. When a buffer zone is disturbed by a new use, it shall be replanted with only native plant species of the Columbia River Gorge.

Findings: A recommended condition of approval should be placed that specifies only local native plant species will be used for seeding of any vegetated areas disturbed by the borehole drilling operations.

C. The applicant shall be responsible for identifying all water resources and their appropriate buffers (see above).

E. Stream, pond, and lake boundaries shall be delineated using the bank full flow boundary for streams and the high water mark for ponds and lakes. The project applicant shall be

responsible for determining the exact location of the appropriate boundary for the water resource.

Findings: The applicant identified all water resources and appropriate buffers in supporting material submitted with the project application.

G. Buffer zones shall be undisturbed unless the following criteria have been satisfied:

(1) The proposed use must have no practicable alternative as determined by the practicable alternative test.

Those portions of a proposed use that have a practicable alternative will not be located in wetlands, stream, pond, lake, and riparian areas and/or their buffer zone.

(2) **Guideline G(2) is not applicable.**

(3) Unavoidable impacts to wetlands and aquatic and riparian areas and their buffer zones shall be offset by deliberate restoration and enhancement or creation (wetlands only) measures as required by the completion of a mitigation plan.

Findings: See the practicable alternatives test and Mitigation Plan headings near the end of the Natural Resources section.

H. Determination of potential natural resources effects shall include consideration of cumulative effects of proposed developments within the following areas: wetlands, streams, ponds, lakes, riparian areas and their buffer zones. *(Added: U.S. Sec. Ag. concurrence 7/1/11)*

Findings: See the Cumulative Impacts heading at the end of the natural resources section.

3. Wildlife and Plants

(Guidelines 3F, 3G, and 3H are not applicable)

A. Protection of sensitive wildlife/plant areas and sites shall begin when proposed new developments or uses are within 1000 ft of a sensitive wildlife/plant site and/or area.

Sensitive Wildlife Areas are those areas depicted in the wildlife inventory and listed in Table 2, including all Priority Habitats listed in this Chapter. The approximate locations of sensitive wildlife and/or plant areas and sites are shown in the wildlife and rare plant inventory.

B. The local government shall submit site plans (of uses that are proposed within 1,000 feet of a sensitive wildlife and/or plant area or site) for review to the Forest Service and the appropriate state agencies (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife or the Washington Department of Wildlife for wildlife issues and by the Oregon or Washington Natural Heritage Program for plant issues).

C. The Forest Service wildlife biologists and/or botanists, in consultation with the appropriate state biologists, shall review the site plan and their field survey records. They shall:

- (1) Identify/verify the precise location of the wildlife and/or plant area or site,
- (2) Determine if a field survey will be required,

- (3) Determine, based on the biology and habitat requirements of the affected wildlife/plant species, if the proposed use would compromise the integrity and function of or result in adverse effects (including cumulative effects) to the wildlife or plant area or site. This would include considering the time of year when wildlife or plant species are sensitive to disturbance, such as nesting and rearing seasons, or flowering season, and
- (4) Delineate the undisturbed 200 ft buffer on the site plan for sensitive plants and/or the appropriate buffer for sensitive wildlife areas or sites, including nesting, roosting and perching sites. ***(Guidelines 3.C.(4)(a), (b), and (c) are not applicable)***

D. The local government, in consultation with the State and federal wildlife biologists and/or botanists, shall use the following criteria in reviewing and evaluating the site plan to ensure that the proposed developments or uses do not compromise the integrity and function of or result in adverse affects to the wildlife or plant area or site: (criteria 1-9).

E. The wildlife/plant protection process may terminate if the local government, in consultation with the Forest Service and state wildlife agency or Heritage program, determines (1) the sensitive wildlife area or site is not active, or (2) the proposed use is not within the buffer zones and would not compromise the integrity of the wildlife/plant area or site, and (3) the proposed use is within the buffer and could be easily moved out of the buffer by simply modifying the project proposal (site plan modifications). If the project applicant accepts these recommendations, the local government shall incorporate them into its development review order and the wildlife/plant protection process may conclude.

Findings: A Forest Service Biologist, Botanist, and Hydrologist have evaluated the proposal for adverse effects to sensitive species and habitats, and documented their findings and recommendations. The project is not within the buffer of any sensitive plant. The following is a summary of sensitive species and habitats present at the site:

- **Riparian buffer of Gorton Creek**
- **Within the buffer of possible roosting/perching for northern spotted owl.**

In order to avoid adverse effects to sensitive species or habitats, the following should be required as mitigation:

1. **If any vegetated area is disturbed, it should be seeded with an approved native seed mix. Seed mix and time of seeding should be coordinated with the Forest Service botanist.**
2. **Work should be conducted between October 1 and February 28 in order to avoid potential disturbance to northern spotted owl.**

With these mitigations the project meets sensitive wildlife, plant, and habitat criteria.

I. Determination of potential natural resources effects shall include consideration of cumulative effects of proposed developments within the following areas: 1) sites within 1,000 feet of sensitive wildlife areas and sites; and 2) sites within 1,000 feet of rare plants. *(Added: U.S. Sec. Ag. concurrence 7/1/11)*

See the cumulative impacts findings at the end of the Natural Resources section.

4. Soil Productivity

A. Soil productivity shall be protected using the following guidelines:

- (1) A description or illustration showing the mitigation measures to control soil erosion and stream sedimentation.
- (2) New developments and land uses shall control all soil movement within the area shown on the site plan.
- (3) The soil area disturbed by new development or land uses, except for new cultivation, shall not exceed 15 percent of the project area.
- (4) Within 1 year of project completion, 80 percent of the project area with surface disturbance shall be established with effective native ground cover species or other soil-stabilizing methods to prevent soil erosion until the area has 80 percent vegetative cover.

Findings: Planned soil disturbance is limited to previously disturbed areas. The following mitigations should be required to prevent delivery of sediment to the stream channel:

1. **Keep and maintain equipment as far as possible from the stream channel and on existing paved or graveled areas.**
2. **Any waste material not used to refill the boreholes should be removed to a suitable location at least 300 feet from the stream channel.**
3. **Utilize adequate erosion control measures to prevent delivery of sediment to the stream channel during drilling activities and until activities are completed.**

With these mitigations soil productivity will be protected.

Practicable Alternative Test

1. An alternative site for a proposed use shall be considered practicable if it is available and the proposed use can be undertaken on that site after taking into consideration cost, technology, logistics, and overall project purposes.

A practicable alternative does not exist if a project applicant satisfactorily demonstrates all of the following:

- A. The basic purpose of the use cannot be reasonably accomplished using one or more other sites in the vicinity that would avoid or result in less adverse effects on wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, wildlife or plant areas and/or sites.
- B. The basic purpose of the use cannot be reasonably accomplished by reducing its proposed size, scope, configuration, or density, or by changing the design of the use in a way that would avoid or result in less adverse effects on wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, wildlife or plant areas and/or sites.
- C. Reasonable attempts were made to remove or accommodate constraints that caused a project applicant to reject alternatives to the proposed use. Such constraints include inadequate infrastructure, parcel size, and land use designations. If a land use designation or recreation intensity class is a constraint, an applicant must request a Management Plan amendment to demonstrate that practicable alternatives do not exist.

Findings: The basic purpose of the project is to investigate the geotechnical properties of this specific location to inform the design for a potential bridge associated with the proposed HCRH State Trail. The two boreholes - on each side of the creek - are considered the minimum necessary to provide adequate geotechnical information. There is no practicable alternative to the work proposed within the riparian buffer. The project is designed to minimize disturbance to previously disturbed areas, and will have no adverse effects to resources.

Mitigation Plan

1. Mitigation Plans shall be prepared when:
 - A. The proposed development or use is within a buffer zone (wetlands, ponds, lakes, riparian areas, wildlife or plant areas and/or sites).
 - B. There is no practicable alternative (see the “practicable alternative” test).

Findings: The proposed use is within a riparian buffer zone and a no practicable alternative test has been completed. The project is designed to minimize disturbance to previously disturbed areas, and will have no adverse effects to natural resources. The mitigation plan consists of the required mitigations listed above and compiled here:

1. If any vegetated area is disturbed, it should be seeded with an approved native seed mix. Seed mix and time of seeding should be coordinated with the Forest Service botanist.
2. Work should be conducted between October 1 and February 28 in order to avoid potential disturbance to sensitive wildlife species.
3. Keep and maintain equipment as far as possible from the stream channel and on existing paved or graveled areas.
4. Any waste material not used to refill the boreholes should be removed to a suitable location at least 300 feet from the stream channel.
5. Utilize adequate erosion control measures to prevent delivery of sediment to the stream channel during drilling activities and until activities are completed.

Cumulative Impacts

SMA and GMA Natural Resource Guidelines require that a determination of potential natural resource effects shall include consideration of cumulative impacts of proposed developments within the following areas: 1) sites within 1,000 feet of sensitive wildlife areas and sites; and 2) sites within 1,000 feet of rare plants. (*Added: U.S. Sec. Ag. concurrence 7/1/11*).

The resources affected by this action are the riparian buffer of Gorton Creek and possible roosting/perching habitat for northern spotted owl.

The spatial boundary for cumulative effects is the area within 1000 feet of each borehole. Because there is no modification to habitat beyond potential disturbance during project

activities, the temporal boundary is limited to the short-term effects from construction, which is anticipated to be completed before February 28, 2015.

The cumulative effects analysis does not include an analysis of past actions. Current conditions are the result of innumerable actions over the past century and beyond. Trying to isolate individual actions that continue to have residual impacts would be practically impossible, and enumerating the details of past actions on an individual basis would not be useful in predicting the cumulative effects of the action under consideration. Focusing on the impacts of past human actions also risks ignoring important residual effects of past natural events, which may also contribute to cumulative effects. Current conditions serve as an aggregate of all relevant past actions, so by looking at current conditions we are sure to capture all the residual effects of past human actions and natural events, regardless of which particular actions or events contributed to those effects.

Present activities and uses within the analysis area include roads, recreation access, and existing graveled areas used for parking. Reasonably foreseeable future actions include continuations of these current uses. The area is under consideration for the potential development of a segment of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail.

Past and present actions and events in the project area have cumulatively affected riparian and habitat conditions in the vicinity of this project. The two proposed geotechnical boreholes, with their associated mitigation measures, are anticipated to have only minor, short-term effects, and will not contribute cumulatively to the residual effects of past actions and events.

This project meets required protection guidelines for natural resources.

G. RECREATION RESOURCES

(Guidelines 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are not applicable)

The Management Plan, Part II, Chapter 4 (Recreation Resources), SMA guidelines, state:

1. New developments and land uses shall not displace existing recreational use.
2. Recreation resources shall be protected from adverse effects by evaluating new developments and land uses as proposed in the site plan. An analysis of both onsite and offsite cumulative effects shall be required.
4. Mitigation measures shall be provided to preclude adverse effects on the recreation resource.

Findings: The Recreation Intensity Class (RIC) for the project area is RIC 4. No recreational use will be displaced by the project. This project meets applicable guidelines for recreation resources.

A condition of approval should be included that if work is conducted during the operating season for Wyeth Campground, the entrance road to the campground should remain open. If closure is necessary it should be temporary, with traffic flow managed by flaggers.

SMA Provisions: Recreation Intensity Classes

(The proposed project is not a recreation use - the Recreation Intensity Class guidelines are not applicable.)

H. CONCLUSION

The proposed geotechnical investigation project is consistent with the National Scenic Area Management Plan Policy and Guidelines provided it meets the criteria and conditions listed in the Findings of Fact and Consistency Determination.

